

COLD WEATHER: PROTECT YOUR MOUTH

The cold, dry climate of winter months can wreak havoc on your mouth and lips. Luckily, there are steps you can take to protect your mouth from the most common cold weather complaints.

Canker sores and cold sores

Canker sores and cold sores, while often confused, are not the same thing.

Canker sores are shallow ulcers that appear inside the mouth. They often make daily tasks like eating and talking uncomfortable. Indulging in your favorite winter treats can lead to more canker sores. Acidic foods and drinks, such as cider, can trigger outbreaks, and spicy foods like chili can have the same effect. If you find yourself dealing with a canker sore, try swishing a mixture of one teaspoon of salt and a half-cup of lukewarm water to keep the sore clean for faster healing.

On the other hand, cold sores (often referred to as fever blisters or herpes simplex type 1) are clusters of fluid-filled blisters that appear outside the mouth. Winter weather exacerbates cold sore

breakouts, so it's particularly important to protect the skin around your mouth.

Continue using a lip balm containing an SPF of 15 or higher. To avoid the spread of viral bacteria, keep your hands clean and do not share utensils or drinking glasses.

Chapped lips

Although cold air and chilling winter winds are synonymous with dry, cracked lips, you don't have to suffer.

Protect your lips by wearing a lip balm containing an SPF of at least 15 – and be sure to apply it early and often. You can also stave off chapped lips by staying hydrated, so be sure to drink plenty of water.

Proactive behaviors can help fight dry lips as well. Avoid licking chapped lips as it can make the problem even worse. As saliva dries, it draws out moisture from the skin.

Sensitivity

If you experience a surge of pain when biting into cold foods, you might feel that

same sensitivity is ever-present during the winter months.

Since you can't avoid cold weather and winds altogether, try brushing your teeth with a desensitizing toothpaste. After a couple of weeks, you should notice a decrease in your irritation level when exposed to cold drinks, food and winter wind.